DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 041 691 RC 004 544

TITLE	Mexican American Educational Needs: A Report for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
INSTITUTION	Arizona State Dept. of Public Instruction, Phoenix.
PUB DATE	13 Dec 69
NOTE	25p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.35
DESCRIPTORS	Compensatory Education Programs, *Cultural Differences, *Dropouts, *Educational Needs, Educational Programs, Employment Potential, Language Handicaps, *Mexican Americans, Parent School Relationship, Preschool Education, *Socioeconomic Status, Student Promotion, Teacher Recruitment
IDENTIFIERS	*Arizona

ABSTRACT

Listing significant educational problems and then establishing priorities and making recommendations are the tasks reported in this 1969 study by the Mexican American Committee for the Minority Group Educational Advisory Commission. It is noted that the problems of injustice in education of Mexican American children in Arizona are related to dropout problems and causes; failure of schools to increase Mexican American employability and provide more than social promotions to those who remain in school; and inadequately informed school staff about the cultural background of Mexican American children. Problem categories discussed include failure to (1) allow for cultural differences, (2) understand the unique language-learning problems, (3) recruit and encourage professional growth of Mexican American educators, and (4) relate to Mexican American parents and other adults. Needed compensatory services are described, and it is concluded that without careful planning, organizing, and implementing of sound educational programs, and without providing him educational services, the Mexican American child can never hope to keep up with his age peers -- and each year of accumulating regression carries with it a growing indifference to learning. (AN)

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MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

A Report For The State Superintendent Of Public Instruction

W. P. Shofstall, Ph. D., Superintendent
State Department of Public Instruction

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The need for an Educational Advisory Commission to the Superintendent of Public Instruction on the educational needs of minority groups was recognized several years ago. However, it was in the fall of 1969 that Dr. W.P. Shofstall officially established the Minority Group Educational Advisory Commission. The Commission held its first meeting on December 13, 1969, in the State Capitol Building. The purpose of the meeting was general orientation and committee organization. Attending were representatives of the major minority ethnic groups in Arizona.

A copy of Dr. Shofstall's remarks to the Commission can be found after this introduction.

Each of the three ethnic groups represented was named a separate committee. Mr. J.O. Maynes, Jr., Director of Migrant Child Education, State Department of Public Instruction; and Mr. Felizardo L. Valencia, teacher at Cholla High School, Tucson, Arizona, were elected to share the chairmanship of the Mexican American Committee.

The first task of the Committee was to list the more significant problems faced by Mexican Americans in education with a special emphasis on problems that are common throughout the State of Arizona. Then we were to establish priorities and hopefully make appropriate recommendations. The Superintendent would then review the recommendations and, if acceptable as educational needs, would use the resources available to his office in seeking their implementation.

The Committee meetings were open to the public but only the appointed members had voting rights. By consensus, the Committee considered only problems which were of an educational nature.

The Committee members represented various fields of endeavor as well as several agencies and organizations. The following were the Committee members:

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JUSTICE FOR ALL CHILDREN IN OUR SCHOOLS

"Man's greatest and most frequent troubles depend on man's injustice more than on adversity." (Kant) Plato stated it simply when he propounded the notion that each man is to be given what is his due. What is injustice? Everything unjust implies that what belongs to a man is withheld or taken away from him--and, not by misfortune, failure of crops, fire or earthquake, but by other men.

Kant has expressed this in the following manner: "We have a divine sovereign, and his divine gift to man is man's right." For a person who does not believe in God to speak of justice is hypocrisy.

The distinguishing mark of justice is that some debt is to be paid or obligation is to be met. What then is our debt or obligation to all children? The question is "What must we do, as teachers?" rather than "What do we want to do?" or "What should we do?" to teach untruth is not only wrong but unjust as well.

Mercy (love) without justice is stupid and evil. The consequences are depravity, violence and destruction. Justice without mercy (love) is cruel and inhuman. The consequences are barbarism.

Our problem is to seek justice for all children in our schools. Our first job is to locate the injustice. Our second job is to try to eliminate this injustice. Just as the way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time, we must do first things first. Let's not start on the second step until we are sure of the first step.

So we ask what rights are our children being denied? Where are the injustices? Now you must remember that we are talking only of God given rights and not of man given rights.

God gave us all the right to life, to liberty and to happiness. He also gave us the right to choose. The right to choose does not imply the ability to choose correctly. We have also the ability to choose wrong. If we choose right we will have life, liberty, and happiness. If we choose wrong we can end up with neither life, liberty, or happiness.

So, if we seek justice for our children we must be teaching them to choose correctly. Please note I did not say we must tell them what is correct. We can't always know what is correct for each child. But, if we are fit to be teachers we do know some things that are essential if the child is to live in freedom and in happiness.

For example:

He must know how to read and to figure. Any child who has not been taught how to read and to figure has not been treated justly.

He must feel he belongs in his country. He must know the behavior that is standard for the society in which he expects to live.

He must feel worthwhile. He must feel needed. He must know how to do something that others need, and feel important.

I believe these three things are essential to justice for children. There must be others.

You will add to or substract from this list. But, you must have a list of the essentials for justice. Your job is to find out if our schools are providing an opportunity for the child to have the essentials for justice. We hope you will determine if any of these essentials for justice are being withheld.

If you can provide a list of the essentials of justice being denied our children, then I promise you my personal dedication and the resources of the State Department of Education in providing these essentials of justice.

I don't know the answers. If I did I would not have asked you here. I hope you don't feel you already know the answers either.

You have noticed that I have not mentioned black, brown, white or red. I have not mentioned Negro, Mexican-American or Indian. I believe we are all children of God with the same rights. But, the world is not perfect and never will be. Therefore, I know that distinctions have been made in the schools regarding minorities. In other words there are injustices so far as minorities are concerned. I don't know if the injustices suffered by the three minorities here are different or not. This is one thing we want to find out.

Now, I don't want to influence your thinking. I only want to state our mission. We are here to start on a project to achieve justice for all our children. Our first step is to draw up a list of injustices and determine priorities. Our second step will be to institute a program in Arizona for removing these injustices.

It is as simple and as complex as that.

W. P. Shofstall, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

INJUSTICES IN THE EDUCATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN IN ARIZONA AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

THE PROBLEM

The present program of instruction in most Arizona schools, particularly those in the larger urban centers, has failed to meet some of the most important educational needs of a significant majority of Mexican-American children as those needs are currently recognized by many informed Mexican-Americans and others. This appears to be supported by the following observations:

1) At least one-half (and in some areas of the state as much as 68 per cent) of Mexican-American children entering the first grade do not graduate from high school. In school enrollment of both males and females between 7 and 13 years of age, Mexican-Americans compare favorably with Anglos. For whatever reasons, however, the schools retain progressively fewer Mexican-American youth beyond age 13. Enrollment of Mexican-Americans, in comparison with that of others, declines each year beyond the elementary and junior high school levels.

2) Less than one per cent of Mexican-American children entering the first grade go on eventually to receive a college degree. Only six per cent of Mexican-Americans had completed at least one year of college in 1960, compared with 22 per cent of Anglos and 12 per cent of Blacks. Of the Mexican-Americans graduating from college, most have majored in Education with a specialty in the teaching of Spanish at the secondary level.

This factor has contributed to a failure to increase Mexican-American employability by school districts, since such crucial areas of education as counseling and basic skills, for example, are virtually devoid of Mexican-American teachers.

3) In 1960 the education of Mexican-Americans, lagging behind that of the rest of the population stood at 7.1 years of school completed by both men and women 25 years of age and over, compared with 12.1 school years completed by Anglos and 9.0 by Blacks and members of other races. For Mexican-American young men and women, 14 to 24 years of age, the median figure was 9.1 years of school completed.

4) Although there is no formal research information available in this area, a reasonable educated guess is that approximately one-fifth of Mexican-American children currently attending Arizona public schools are "mental drop-outs." While these children attend school physically, they have not achieved nor are they presently achieving a quality of education that will in all likelihood significantly improve their socio-economic condition. Deficiencies associated with this phenomenon apparently begin to appear at the elementary level and increase progressively through high school. Studies indicate that by the sixth grade, Mexican-American students are generally from 1½ to 3 years behind normal competency in reading. The "mental drop-out" problem is especially evident in the area of basic skills, but is by no means limited to reading, writing, and computing skills. Notably,

the "mental drop-out" cannot select, organize, summarize, or evaluate materials--functions that are considered indispensable to reading.

5) The educational problems of the marginal segment of Mexican-American students mentioned above are further compounded by the inability or unwillingness of the school staff to remedy or correct certain of the students' fundamental deficiencies. By the time the marginal segment of students have reached high school, they have become apathetic and unresponsive to school routine. Confronted by their typically inhibited and polite manner, the teacher, often for reasons of expedience or frustration, routinely promotes these students until they are granted a traditional diploma at the completion of high school. The uninitiated often assume that the diploma is a sign of preparation to negotiate and compete with more fully educated peers in the dominant culture. The deplorable economic status of the majority of Mexican-Americans in Arizona, and the absence of college preparation among them, are eloquent testimony to the vanity of this assumption.

6) As with any other student, the Mexican-American child is the totality of experiences undergone in the home and in the immediate environment. All of these experiences are part of him and inevitably affect his classroom behavior and his learning progress. To be sure, the typical Mexican-American student is influenced by the low family income, the delapidated conditions of his home and its many occupants, the poor sanitation services surrounding him, and his lack of adequate

nutrition. Most importantly, he is strongly affected by different cultural and linguistic forces not shared by his Anglo peers nor, in most cases, by his teachers and the educational system. Generally, his problems are not the same as those of Indians and Blacks. In spite of this, school districts have historically assumed that the same educational approach is effective, and should be mandatory, for all. The present socio-economic status of the Mexican-American population in Arizona points out the fallacy of this assumption.

7) The 1960 census indicates that there were 194,356 Mexican-Americans in Arizona, constituting 14.9 per cent of the total pupulation with heaviest concentration in Phoenix (78,990) and Tucson (44,481). The 1965 census projection estimates that Mexican-Americans constituted 17 per cent of the Arizona population. It is interesting to note that the rate of increase of the Mexican-American population from 1950 to 1960 (51 per cent) by far surpassed that of the rest of the population (39 per cent). The increase of the Mexican-American population comes about in two ways: births and immigration. Mexican-American women have more children on the average than Anglo or Black women. For each 1,000 women ages 15 to 49 in 1960, Mexican-Americans had 709 children under five years of age; Blacks and other races, 613; and Anglos, 455.

Figures from the census point out that the Mexican-American population surpasses the rest of the population in rate of growth and

that the overwhelming concentration is at an age most affected by the public school system. In addition, the local Mexican-American population is receiving strong cultural reinforcement from the significant number of Mexican immigrants who enter the United States from Mexico for permanent residence at the rate of 3,500 per month and who totalled 387,000 entries from 1960 to 1968 alone with a great number of them establishing residence in Arizona.

The implication for education is that unless immediate improvement in educational practices related to Mexican-American students is achieved, the magnitude of the problem will increase. It will grow in size (increased population) and in depth (reinforcement of cultural and linguistic characteristics).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the more outstanding problems related to the education of Mexican-American children which are noted in the preceding narrative are broadly categorized below. Detailed recommendations concerning each of these problems are detailed in the subsequent sections.

I. Failure to understand the cultural differences of the Mexican-American.

II. Failure to understand the unique language learning problems of the Mexican-American.

III. Failure to recruit and encourage professional growth of Mexican-American educators.

IV. Failure to relate to Mexican-American parents and other adults.

V. Needed compensatory services.

I. FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN.

Teachers are not really aware of the cultural background of Mexican-American children and they are reluctant to deal with cultural differences in preparing and presenting educational programs.

Teachers need to be familiar with the cultural differences that exist and to understand how these differences tend to handicap students in gaining a full education.

The school districts should encourage all of their teachers to take part in some kind of program which will:

1) identify some of the specific and unique needs of Mexican-American children;

2) give teachers the opportunity to understand the culture of the Mexican-American;

3) identify ways in which the curriculum can be revised to meet specific needs;

4) enable teachers to have the opportunity to consider some specific conditions which need attention;

5) suggest how the curriculum can contribute in a positive way in fulfilling the educational goals of Mexican-Americans.

II. FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE-LEARNING PROBLEMS OF MEXICAN AMERICANS.

Due to the lack of funds or trained personnel, many districts have failed to make an adequate assessment of the language-learning problems of the Mexican-American child. Where such assessments have been made, districts have lacked the will or know-how to solve the fundamental language problems of their Spanish-speaking population. Little or nothing has been done to update the competency of classroom teachers and to acquaint them with methodology and materials for the effective teaching of oral English.

The State Department of Public Instruction should encourage and assist:

1) each district to conduct an adequate study into the language-learning problems of its own Spanish-speaking children and should maintain such a study with a competent professional staff.

2) each district to recognize and to meet the wide range of differences that exist in language-learning. The tendency to generalize the nature of the language-learning problems of the Spanish-speaking child should be resisted.

3) each district to develop and maintain special English classes under competent teachers whose efforts are carefully coordinated by competent consultants.

4) each district to conduct regular, high-quality in-service programs to acquaint teachers with the latest findings concerning language-learning problems and strategies for

solving them.

5) each district not merely to retrain teachers, but to employ teachers who have been specifically and recently trained to teach oral English development.

III. FAILURE TO RECRUIT AND ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATORS

In the past, school districts have made it a practice, consciously or unconsciously, not to recruit Mexican-American teachers. In addition, very little effort has been made to utilize positively the personal and professional resources of the Mexican-American teachers who are currently employed in seeking and implementing solutions to the educational problems confronting Mexican-American children.

The 1969-70 statistics reveal that out of a total of 1044 administrative positions in Arizona's public schools, there were 32 Spanish-surnamed administrators at the elementary school level. The following is a breakdown of elementary school administrators by county:

County	No. Spanish-surnamed Elem. Admin.
Apache	1
Cochise	0
Coconino	4
Gila	1
Graham	1
Greenlee	2
Maricopa	7
Mohave	0
Navajo	1
Pima	5
Pinal	1
Santa Cruz	3
Yavapai	0
Yuma	5

The paucity of Mexican-American administrators at the secondary level is notable:

County	No. Spanish-surnamed Sec. Admin.
Apache	0
Cochise	0
Coconino	0

County	No. Spanish-surnamed Sec. Admin.
Gila	1
Graham	0
Greenlee	0
Maricopa	2
Mohave	0
Navajo	0
Pima	0
Pinal	1
Santa Cruz	0
Yavapai	1
Yuma	1

In the 1968-69 school year, there were a total of 12,467 teachers employed in Arizona's public elementary schools. Of this total only 448 Spanish surnamed. At the secondary level, a total of 5,119 teachers were employed and only 253 of these teachers were Spanish surnamed. The total of all teachers employed in Arizona last year reached 17,586 of whom 701 were Spanish-surnamed or 3.4 per cent of the State's total.

While Mexican-American ethnicity is not an absolute guarantee that the teacher or administrator will have an empathy for an understanding of the Mexican-American child's problems, there is a growing consensus among educators in that ethnicity is a positive asset. If this assumption is true, then it behooves the school districts to assign Mexican-American educators to areas of work where the impact of their knowledge and experience benefits the Mexican-American students most.

1) Each district should immediately initiate and continue a program of recruiting Mexican-American educators until their number is proportionate to the number of Mexican-American students enrolled in the district.

2) The assignment policies of each district should be

re-examined to assure that the maximum positive potential of each educator concerned is most keenly felt in the areas of greatest needs.

3) Prospective administrators should be appointed on proof of competence in meeting the needs of Mexican-American children if they are to serve a school with a significant Mexican-American population.

4) In employing new teachers, the school districts should set up guidelines to assure that all teachers serving Mexican-American children have strong empathy for and a deep understanding of the Mexican-American.

5) Each district should maintain a standing committee of Mexican-American educators to inform it on matters concerning Mexican-Americans.

IV. FAILURE TO RELATE TO MEXICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS AND OTHER INTERESTED ADULTS.

Although many educators generally agree that parental involvement in the educational activities of their children is a vital necessity in securing a full education for the children, the degree of involvement in school activities by Mexican-American parents and elders is negligible, at least, when compared to their Anglo counterparts. Such traditional approaches as PTA participation and parent-teacher conferences have not proved successful in the past in attracting Mexican-American parents to the school.

It can be reasonably assumed that the growing gap between school and home is caused by numerous circumstances, especially the following:

1) School personnel have generally been unwilling or unable to recognize the various home influences impinging on the Mexican-American family and to adapt the educational program to meet the needs of the Mexican-American home.

2) Because of their low socio-economic status, the majority of Mexican-American parents invest most of their time trying to provide for the family's survival leaving little time for involvement in the school activities of their children.

3) To some extent, the prevailing negative attitudes of some Mexican-American parents are partially caused by unfavorable experiences suffered during their own attendance at school.

4) The current means for improving the educational status of Mexican-American adults leave much to be desired. The states adult basic education program from various points of view is an outgrowth and repetition of the abstract educational practices which caused many Mexican-American parents to drop out of school years ago. At the present time the ABE program is the main avenue for their educational improvement but is only reaching less than 2 per cent of the states potential ABE enrollment. As stated previously, the educational level of Mexican-Americans in Arizona stands at 7.1 school years completed.

In view of the circumstances above, the following recommendations are made:

1) The present curriculum and instructional practices of many schools in the state should be revised to realistically meet the needs of Mexican-American children in view of their home influences.

2) Noting the low educational level of the majority of Mexican-American adults, serious revision of adult basic education programs should be undertaken to provide these adults with educational programs founded on sound adult learning principles.

3) The vast and virtually untapped resources of school plants and staffs should be opened for adult use.

4) A sound program of family counseling should be initiated to narrow the gap between the school and the Mexican-American home.

5) The school districts should maintain and be receptive to the advice of standing committees of Mexican-American community members in matters affecting educational programs and practices.

V. SPECIAL COMPENSATORY SERVICES NEEDED.

1) By age six, the Mexican-American child has already been so strongly influenced by cultural and linguistic forces in his home that require special initial educational processes to equate him with his non-Mexican-American peers. It is strongly recommended that such quality processes be developed to be offered as one year pre-school experiences and three months summer experiences following the first grade.

2) Mexican-American ethnicity does not make all Mexican-Americans the same. Cultural, linguistic and socio-economic characteristics of Mexican-American children extend from one end of a continuum to another. Provisions should be made for this variable in all educational aspects affecting the Mexican-American child.

3) Associated with school routine are a host of peripheral demands that require added expenditures by students for such things as yearbooks, rings, social and athletic activities and even textbooks. There is a keenly felt and unjustifiable stigma felt by many students who are economically unable to pay for these services. School districts would do well to render these services free of charge to all students or abolish them.

4) Due to their low economic resources, the majority of Mexican-American children cannot meet satisfactory nutritional requirements. It is recommended that districts identify

such cases and provide free food service.

5) The high drop-out rate of Mexican-American children arises in part from the inability of districts to retain them through high school and colleges, through their four year sequence. Massive scholarship aid is a potential remedy though at best it can be only a "band-aid" approach. It is recommended that a central clearing house to make all scholarship information available to Mexican-American students be made immediately operable.

6) Teacher-aides drawn from the Mexican-American community should be hired by districts in the interest of quality education for Mexican-Americans but not to supplant competent teachers.

7) Because of the inability of a majority of Mexican-Americans to obtain satisfactory health services, school districts should become involved in the Mexican-American child's health in his earliest formative years.

Below are listed the total number of principals' positions now filled for both Elementary and High Schools and positions filled by Spanish-surnamed persons. Information listed by counties:

COUNTY	TOTAL POSITIONS	ELEMENTARY	HIGH SCHOOL
		Spanish Surnamed	Position by Spanish Surname
APACHE	29	1	0
COCHISE	64	0	0
COCONINO	51	4	0
GILA	28	1	1
GRAHAM	21	1	0
GREENLEE	18	2	0
MARICOPA	478	7	2
MOHAVE	19	0	0
NAVAJO	33	1	0
PIMA	159	5	0
PINAL	59	1	1
SANTA CRUZ	9	4	0
YAVAPAI	32	0	1
YUMA	44	5	1
Totals	1,044	33	6

This information was compiled from the Arizona Educational Directory, State Department of Public Instruction, 1969-70.

THE FOLLOWING STATISTICAL FIGURES ARE BASED ON THE 1968-69 SCHOOL YEAR

COUNTIES	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF TEACHERS ELEM.	NUMBER OF TEACHERS H.S.	TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHERS	NUMBER OF SPANISH SURNAMED TEACHERS ELEM.	NUMBER OF SPANISH SURNAMED TEACHERS H.S.	TOTAL NUMBER SPANISH SURNAMED	% OF SPANISH SURNAMED TEACHERS
Apache	26	267	44	311	9	0	9	2.9%
Cochise	51	535	254	789	27	22	49	6.2
Coconino	27	306	156	462	16	6	22	4.7
Gila	25	225	103	328	16	8	24	7.3
Graham	11	117	67	184	2	1	3	1.6
Greenlee	14	92	57	149	11	2	13	8.7
Maricopa	259	6,857	2,643	9,500	189	78	267	2.8
Mohave	18	175	54	229	3	3	6	2.6
Navajo	32	223	132	355	7	3	10	2.8
Pima	120	2,210	969	3,179	88	79	167	5.2
Pinal	45	605	257	862	43	16	59	6.8
Santa Cruz	14	129	60	189	13	10	23	12.1
Yavapai	32	252	140	392	7	9	16	4.0
Yuma	34	474	183	657	15	16	31	4.7
Ariz. State School for the Deaf & Blind					2		2	
TOTAL STATE	708	12,467	5,119	17,586	448	253	701	3.4%

SUMMARY

Without careful planning, organizing and implementing sound and real educational programs, and without providing educational services, the Mexican-American child can never hope to keep up with his age peers, and each year of accumulating regression carries with it a growing indifference to learning.

If the fact of being a non-English speaker, having a somewhat different home-cultural background, coming from a low socio-economic environment, lacking proper nutritional and health conditions at home. parents lacking positive attitudes toward education oppresses the Mexican-American child, it also compounds the difficulties of the teacher and the school. Teachers inadequately prepared to meet the needs of already disadvantaged children produce tragic teaching-learning conditions that defy easy solutions. Teaching and testing materials, too, are frequently without relevance to the age of the child, his linguistic inabilities in English or to his own cultural background.

Since the Mexican-American child is seldom encouraged or sometimes forced to go to school, and when attending meets such powerful deterrents to learning, the Mexican-American child becomes an early, unnoticed and almost automatic school dropout or may remain in school and become a mental dropout.